

**EXTENSION OF SCOPING PERIOD FOR  
COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF THE  
BUCKHORN MOUNTAIN PROJECT  
A SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
TO THE  
CROWN JEWEL MINE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (FS), are requesting comments regarding the scope of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to address the Buckhorn Mountain Project proposal. The comment period is being extended an additional 21 days to November 10, 2003. The SEIS will be a combined National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) document and will supplement the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Crown Jewel Mine (January 1997) prepared for a previous mining proposal on Buckhorn Mountain. The SEIS will fulfill and be consistent with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, and the 1989 Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended.

**Description of Proposal:** The Buckhorn Mountain Project proposal involves the development of an underground gold mine and satellite milling operation in Okanogan County, Washington. The proponent's plan of operations may be viewed on-line at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/okanogan/> (click on Bulletin Board). The project is described in more detail below in the Background section.

**Proponent:** Crown Resources Corporation

**Location of Proposal:** The Buckhorn Mountain Project proposal is located approximately 21 miles east of Oroville, Washington, and 3 ½ miles south of the Canadian border. Crown Resources Corporation proposes to develop an underground gold mine on Buckhorn Mountain approximately 3.5 air miles east of Chesaw, Washington, in Sections 24 and 25, T. 40 N., R. 30 E., W.M., and a satellite milling facility 2 miles south of Chesaw in Section 4, T. 39 N., R. 30 E., W.M. (See Figure 1).

**Lead and Cooperating Agencies:** Ecology and the FS will be joint lead agencies in accordance with 40 CFR 1501.5 (b), and are responsible for preparation of the SEIS. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources will be a cooperating agency in accordance with 40 CFR 1501.6. Additional cooperating agencies may be identified as the project proceeds.

**Possible Alternatives:** The Crown Jewel Mine FEIS analyzed a reasonable range of alternatives. Some aspects of the new underground mine proposal differ from the underground mine alternative presented in the Crown Jewel Mine FEIS, although a number of components remain the same. Because a reasonable range of alternatives was established in the preceding FEIS, additional alternatives will be limited to alternative components to the underground mining/milling operation proposed by Crown Resources Corporation and will be based on the response to scoping.

**Preliminary Issues Identified by the FS:** A number of issues were identified in the Crown Jewel Mine FEIS. The major issues identified concerned water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat impacts, increased traffic, the use of toxic materials, extraction impacts, potential for spills, the effects on the visual quality of the area, and social/economic impacts. Similar issues are proposed to be addressed in the SEIS.

**Preliminary Issues Identified by Ecology:** In addition to the preliminary issues identified by the FS, Ecology has identified the following areas for discussion in the SEIS:

- Transportation alternatives for conveying ore from the mine to the milling facility;
- Truck transportation impacts to air quality and surface water quality;
- Noise associated with blasting, transportation, and facility operation;
- Alternatives for supplying energy to the mine and milling facility;
- Alternatives for ore processing;
- Alternatives for tailings facility siting;
- Evaluation of tailing paste backfill feasibility;
- Impact of mine, mill, and tailings on ground and surface water quality;
- Establishing baseline for ground and surface water quality;
- Water needed for mining operations;
- Water needed for milling facilities; and
- Water right mitigation measures associated with the project.

**Scoping:** Agencies, affected tribes, organizations, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the SEIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. The comment period which opened on September 5, 2003, is being extended and will close on November 10, 2003.

Ecology and FS have identified a single point of contact for receiving comments on the scope of the SEIS. Comments may be submitted in writing to:

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## **BACKGROUND**

**Proposed Action:** The proposal would consist of an underground mine on Forest Service (FS) land and private land with an off-site mill and tailings facility on private land (See Figures 2 and 3). The mineral deposit itself lies under both private and FS lands. The ore would be transported from the mine to the mill site by road in highway-legal trucks. The majority of underground mine openings would be backfilled upon completion of mining. The backfill would consist of development rock from the mine and gravel excavated during development of the mill/tailings facility. A cement binder would be added to some of the backfill. Haul trucks would transport the backfill gravel to the mine site. Water used in the milling facility would be obtained using existing surface and ground water rights controlled by the proponent. Water would be conveyed in a buried pipeline from the location of the water rights to the mill for process use.

The proposal would result in disturbance of approximately 25 acres of public lands (23 acres of FS lands and two acres of Washington State Department of Natural Resources Land) and about 110 acres of private lands. The mine site would consist of approximately 27 acres of fenced surface facilities located above the ore deposit. The mill and tailings disposal facility would occupy approximately 90 acres of private land. The transportation route from the mine to the mill is along a road alignment approximately 6 miles in length. Mill tailings, composed of dilute cyanide process solution and ground ore, are proposed to be detoxified using a closed circuit destruction process and piped to an engineered disposal facility on private land.

Approximately 8 months of underground development work is required prior to initial ore production. The 88,000 tons of development rock generated during this initial period would be temporarily staged on the surface until returned underground as backfill. Construction of the mill, administrative office, and the tailings disposal facility would occur concurrently. Full-scale production of fifteen hundred tons of ore per day is likely to begin twelve months after project initiation. Commercial production is projected to continue for approximately 90 months (7.4 years). Active physical decommissioning of site facilities would continue for approximately 2 additional years upon mining cessation, followed by a minimum of three additional years of reclamation monitoring and final closure. The estimated number of employees is 90 at the peak of construction activities and 150 during mining and milling operations, including full time contract trucking employees.

All project activities must be in compliance Chapter 78.56 RCW (Metals Mining and Milling Operations) and Chapter 78.44 RCW (Surface Mining). A reclamation plan that meets the standard of Chapter 78.44 RCW may be required for any surface mining of sands and gravels associated with the project.

**Purpose and Need:** The purpose and need for the SEIS is to respond to the plan of operations and other permit applications submitted by the proponent to construct and operate a mine in the specific ore body on Buckhorn Mountain, along with satellite processing facilities that differ from those described in the underground mine proposal

evaluated in the Crown Jewel Mine Final Environmental Impact Statement, while protecting surface resources.

The SEIS will include analysis of probable environmental impacts of the proposal and mitigation measures and monitoring requirements for reclamation, spill prevention/emergency response planning, water quality, erosion and sediment control, air quality, wildlife impacts and protection, and public safety as well as for other issues and concerns.